

STATEMENT PREPARED FOR DELIVERY:
SPACE FLIGHT PARTICIPANT PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT
PRESS CONFERENCE; OCTOBER 24, 1985
JAMES M. BEGGS, NASA ADMINISTRATOR

Next January, NASA will fly a young woman from Concord, New Hampshire into space. She is a teacher and her name is Sharon Christa McAuliffe. Mrs. McAuliffe was chosen from more than 11,000 applicants to be America's first passenger on the Shuttle under NASA's Space Flight Participant Program.

Today we are proud to announce that the second American citizen to fly under the program will be a journalist. He or she will be chosen from among the more than 125,000 working journalists throughout the country and abroad, and, we hope, will fly next fall.

Now I know there are those who would like to put some journalists into orbit - permanently. But I can assure you that our winning candidate will not only get a round-trip ticket, but a first-class, unforgettable ride.

When we announced the Space Flight Participant program last April, we stressed that those fortunate enough to fly would come from all segments of our society. We also said that each would have a different story to tell; and each will have the chance to tell it their own way, based on their experience, talents and skills. We have built this kind of flexibility into the program intentionally. We want all participants to be able to tell their own story in the best way they know how.

Astronauts have tried to do this since the manned space program began. They are very articulate on technical matters, but they are not trained communicators. Teachers are; and so are members of the Fourth Estate. Journalists are trained to report and comment on the news, what Woodrow Wilson called "the atmosphere of events." And every day their words and images flow through our minds and imaginations to help us shape perspectives on our lives and our world. Journalists are, indeed, the public's eyes and ears.

So we expect that the journalist who flies next September will not only see all and hear all, but will tell all, as well. And what a story to tell - from the time he or she advances to the semi-finals, through training and the mission itself to the first post-flight news conference about a month after the flight!

After that, our candidate will go off duty, no longer beholden to NASA. But we would hope for and encourage more fallout from the experience, depending on the winner's skills and predelictions. Perhaps a book, or a series of magazine articles will be developed; possibly a radio or television series, or traveling photo or editorial cartoon exhibits. Maybe all of these and more will result, if our winner has the time and talents to produce them.

How will the winner be selected? Given the varied and specialized nature of journalists' associations, we were hard put to find one to assist us that represents the spectrum of journalism across the board. After consulting with an ad hoc group of working journalists brought together by the Radio-Television News Directors Association, we agreed that an excellent and credible choice would be an organization that nourishes the seed corn for the profession, rather than one that represents any one segment of it.

We chose the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication. This association is made up of 170 journalism schools in the country. Its sister organization is the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the nation's oldest organization of journalism educators. AEJMC is affiliated with 40 organizations, representing a wide variety of working journalists.

ASJMC, in cooperation with those journalism educators and media professionals, has agreed to organize a national selection process to help choose the journalist who will fly. Next March, a national panel of working journalists, deans and retired deans of journalism schools and nationally recognized leaders in other fields will choose five people from 40 semi-finalists in five regions around the country. NASA will select the winner and back-up candidates from among those five.

Choosing the first journalist to fly in space from among the many thousands we expect to apply will be tough, indeed. American journalists are skillful, talented and persuasive. And they are very competitive. But we'll do our best to pick a person that does honor to the entire profession and one that all Americans can be proud of.

Perhaps someone here today will be that person. I certainly hope you will all apply. And if anyone believes they have little chance for success, I commend to you some words from my old friend, Shakespeare. They are from "All's Well That Ends Well."

"Oft expectation fails and most oft there

Where most it promises, and oft it hits

Where hope is coldest and despair most fits."

Think about it. And good luck to you all.

Thank you very much.